

The Chronicle and Index

OF THE UNITARIAN SOCIETY.

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CONTRIBUTIONS in aid of the gratuitous publication and circulation of the *Chronicle and Index*:—

J. Hargreaves, Clitheroe -	- £0 2 6
Miss Coe, Edinburgh -	- 0 2 6
Rev. J. H. Bibby, Ballee -	- 0 5 0
A Friend, Newcastle-on-Tyne -	- 0 5 0
Mrs. Osler, Edgbaston, -	- 0 10 0

Further contributions, which may be sent to the Rev. J. C. Street, will be duly acknowledged.

THE FORTHCOMING ANNIVERSARIES.

The Unitarian Society will celebrate its 55th Anniversary during the present month. The Rev. Dr. Geo. Vance Smith, Principal of Carmarthen College, will preach in the morning and evening at Rosemary Street Church, and in the afternoon at Moneyrea, and collections will take place on each occasion on behalf of the Funds of the Society.

On Monday there will be a Sunday School Conference at Comber, at which the Rev. J. A. Kelly will read a paper.

On Tuesday morning there will be a Welcome Breakfast in the Lombard Street Hall, and in the evening of the same day the Annual Meeting of the Society will be held in Rosemary Street Hall.

Representatives from various English and Scottish Associations will be present at these meetings, and there is no doubt that the proceedings will be of an animated and encouraging character. We hope our friends will take care that there shall be, what our American brethren call, "a good time."

THE Rev. J. C. Street has continued his course of lectures on "How I left Orthodoxy"

during the past month. His subjects have been:—

1. A way opening out for me. Through night to light. My surrender of the belief in hell.

2. The new path. From trinity to unity. From tyranny to fatherhood.

3. Brighter outlooks! The wilderness blossoming as the rose. No caste, but universal brotherhood.

On the last Sunday in the month the Rev. J. H. Bibby lectured on, "Who, then, is Paul?"

The attendances at Mr. Street's lectures have been very large.

THE regular Monthly Services for the children were held as usual in Rosemary Street on the first Sunday in last month, and at Hopeton Street on the third Sunday. The Rev. J. C. Street delivered addresses on both occasions. At the former school Mr. Darbishire conducted the devotional service, and at the latter Mr. Gilliland gave out the hymns. The subjects of Mr. Street's addresses were "The Better Land," and "The Story of John and Jesus, and their message of Repentance." There were good attendances at both schools, and the interest of the children was thoroughly sustained.

THE Mutual Improvement Association has continued its useful work during the month of March. On March 1st, amid the heaviest snowstorm of the winter, Miss Tod came down and delivered to a small but most appreciative audience a lecture on "The Representative Principle in Administration." On the 8th, Mr. Henry Riddell, M.E., read an excellent paper on "Climate and Geology." On the 15th, Mr. H. J. Aston, M.A., read a capital

philological paper, entitled, "What's in a Name?" On the 22nd there was a most interesting programme of music and readings; and on the 29th Mr. W. Clements lectured on "Electric Force." The proceedings of the month were marked by great variety, ability, and entertainment.

ON 27th ult., a tea meeting was held of the congregation at Moneyrea. After tea, the chair was taken by the minister, the Rev. G. W. Bannister, who opened the meeting with devotional exercises and an address on the 138rd Psalm. He said—It is indeed a good and pleasant thing for brethren to dwell together in unity. It is there that heaven's choicest blessings fall. It is like the sacred oil on Aaron's head, that ran down to the skirts of his garment, and which, while it shed a rich fragrance around, was supposed to impart a divine life within, to fit him for the service of the Most High. It was like the dew that descended on Mount Hermon, silently and unseen, to refresh and invigorate the flowers, for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life. And that is the blessing we most need—more life in the committee, more life in the choir, more life in the Sunday School, more life through all the church; and that the highest life of all—life for evermore, the life that shall endure when every other form of life has passed away—eternal life, because it is the life of love.

It was to promote this that they were gathered together that evening; and it was his desire that at least once a year the members of the Church should meet together in that way, to hold a friendly conference on all matters affecting the congregation, and to speak of any measure that might promote their spiritual or temporal welfare as a church. Mr. W. Bennett then gave a very appropriate address. He said that at times he felt discouraged because the work of the church was too much left to the willing few, but he believed that such meetings, if continued from year to year, would be productive of great good.

Mr. A. K. Stewart then gave a report from the Sunday School, from which it appeared

that this good work had been carried on successfully during the past year. As Treasurer of the Restoration Fund, he also said that no special efforts had been made during the year towards the removal of the debt, but some subscriptions had been received by Mr. Bennett from friends at Birmingham and Bolton, and another appeal had been made to the congregation of Moneyrea, with the result that the committee were much encouraged by the readiness with which those from whom large subscriptions could not be expected had subscribed according to their means. More extended efforts would be made in the coming year.

It was stated that many also had doubled their stipends, and three-fourths of the church had considerably increased their stipends during the year, so that the church was in a better financial position than it had been for many years.

Considerable interest has been awakened among the young by a Band of Hope established by the minister.

The evening was enlivened by songs and duets, ably rendered by members of the choir.

You may wonder, perhaps, that I have spoken all this night in praise of war. Yet truly, if it might be, I for one would fain join in the cadence of hammer-strokes that should beat swords into ploughshares; and that this cannot be, is not the fault of us men. It is *your* fault. Wholly yours. Only by your command, or by your permission, can any contest take place among us. And the real final reason for all the poverty, misery, and rage of battle throughout Europe, is simply that you women, however good, however religious, however self-sacrificing for those whom you love, are too selfish and too thoughtless to take pains for any creature out of your own immediate circles. You fancy that you are sorry for the pains of others. Now, I just tell you this, that if the usual course of war, instead of unroofing peasants' houses, and ravaging peasants' fields merely broke the china upon your own drawing-room tables, no war in civilised countries would last a week. I tell you more, that at whatever moment you chose to put a period

to war, you could do it with less trouble than you take any day to go out to dinner. You know, or at least you might know if you would think, that every battle you hear of has made many widows and orphans. We have none of us heart enough truly to mourn with these. But at least we might put on the outer symbols of mourning with them. Let but every Christian lady who has conscience toward God vow that she will mourn, at least outwardly, for His killed creatures. Your praying is useless, and your church-going mere mockery of God, if you have not plain obedience in you enough for this. Let every lady in the upper classes of civilised Europe simply vow that, while any cruel war proceeds, she will wear *black*—a mute black—with no jewel, no ornament, no excuse for, or evasion into, prettiness. I tell you again, no war would last a week. And lastly, you women of England are all now shrieking with one voice—you and you clergymen together—because you hear of your bibles being attacked. If you choose to obey your bibles you will never care who attacks them. It is just because you never fulfil a single downright precept of the book that you are so careful for its credit; and just because you don't care to obey its whole words that you are so particular about the letters of them. The Bible tells you to dress plainly, and you are mad for finery; the Bible tells you to have pity on the poor, and you crush them under your carriage wheels; the Bible tells you to do judgment and justice, and you do not know, nor care to know, so much as what the Bible word "justice" means. Do but learn so much of God's truth as that comes to; know what he means when he tells you to be just; and teach your sons that their bravery is but a fool's boast, and their deeds but a firebrand's tossing, unless they are indeed just men, and perfect in the fear of God; and you will soon have no more war, unless it be indeed such as is willed by Him, of whom, though Prince of Peace, it is also written, "In righteousness he doth judge and make war."

If you have to take away masses of men from all industrious employment—to feed them by the labour of others—to provide them with destructive machines varied daily in national

rivalship of inventive cost; if you have to ravage the country which you attack—to destroy for a score of future years its roads, its woods, its cities, and its harbours; and if finally, having brought masses of men counted by hundreds of thousands face to face, you tear those masses to pieces with jagged shot, and leave the living creatures countless beyond all help of surgery, to starve and parch through days of torture down into clots of clay—What book of accounts shall record the cost of your work—what book of judgment sentence the guilt of it?—*Ruskin*.

THE following excellent synopsis of Unitarianism, the religion of Jesus Christ and of the Bible, has been issued and widely circulated by the minister and congregation of the Church of the Divine Unity, Newcastle-on-Tyne:—

The congregation meeting in the Church of the Divine Unity, New Bridge Street, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, has no formal creed to impose upon either minister or members. The church is founded for the purposes of Divine worship and the culture of the religious life. Believing that the mind of man makes continual progress under the inspiration of God, we do not wish to impose our faith, in a dogmatic form, upon those who shall follow us. At the same time we hold it to be our duty and privilege to declare and vindicate those great truths of religion which are most surely believed by us.

I.—In the human soul we find the revelation of a God of perfect love, wisdom, and holiness. The laws of reason testify to an Eternal Mind; the authority of conscience reveals a Righteous Will; the affections of the heart manifest a Love infinite and unchanging. In nature we find an Almighty Power; but in the experience of the soul we discover a Gracious Father. Nothing is more convincing evidence of God's existence than this craving of human thought to find an Infinite Mind, this yearning of conscience after a Perfect Righteousness, this throbbing of the heart to feel the sympathy of an Infinite Love. As the instincts of sense lead to faith in an external world, so the powers and aspirations of the soul lead us to faith in

a personal God of perfect wisdom, love, and holiness. Every adequate interpretation of man's nature inevitably reveals God's existence.

II.—The Bible is the greatest book of religion the world has seen. It is the history of man's search to find out God. In the Bible we learn how, through ignorance and superstition, men felt their way to truth; how one inspired teacher after another rose to make some greater revelation of God, until at last in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ there was given the fullest and grandest conception of a universal Father of one vast human family.

III.—Jesus Christ was the Son of God, in whose perfect life we have the sublimest manifestation of the divine will and character. In him we see the complete atonement of the human will to the divine will, the entire conformity of mind and heart and conscience to the purposes of God. Christ represents to us the perfection after which we must strive. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Christ reveals the possibility of that union with God which ought to be the end of all our lives. "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us."

IV.—All the lines of spiritual evidence lead us to the sure and certain hope of immortal life beyond death. Life in this world needs the completion of the divine plan and the vindication of the divine purpose in an eternal life of final blessedness and endless progress. The energies of thought, will, and affection demand an infinite life for their exercise as they strive after the perfection of God. The sins and sufferings of the world can have no adequate interpretation except as temporary conditions of a moral discipline, which must at last be crowned by the redemption of every child of God.

V.—Salvation is deliverance from sin, and true blessedness is the result of a life in conformity to the will of God. Christ said: "The kingdom of God is within you;" and heavenly peace and joy may be ours here and now, through loving obedience to God's will and childlike trust in his perfect wisdom. By faith

in the heavenly Father's goodness, and the dedication of ourselves to his service, we gain strength and calmness to bear our burdens, to endure our sorrows, and to fulfil the works of him who has sent us into his world. Our faith gives us courage, and hope, and joy in life, and takes away all fear from death.

VI.—For instruction in these great truths, and for the cultivation of our faith, we need the help of the public services of religion. By prayer and praise in common worship we seek to realise the presence of God, and to express the joy, and trust, and aspiration, which animate our souls when we think of his greatness and goodness; while the public ministry of religion maintains the sublime truths of Christianity, and also announces the fresh inspiration of God within the seeking soul to-day.

MR. WYBERT REEVE IN THE PULPIT.

THERE was a large congregation assembled on Sunday evening, at the Unitarian Church, Eastern Hill, Melbourne, to hear the eminent actor-author deliver his address entitled "Excelsior." Mr. Reeve judiciously eschewed all polemical discussion as to the means of ascending higher in moral and spiritual life, and simply confined himself to relating in a very interesting style many instances to prove how humanity is perpetually evolutionising towards a higher and nobler existence. Mr. Reeve, it is almost needless to say, read his discourse with masterly perfection, never becoming too demonstrative, yet never failing to give just the right emphasis and inflection to impress and interest his audience. Mr. Reeve commenced, of course, by reference to the "Alpine heights," remarking how one feels in one's heart a great longing to dare essay the climbing of the lofty peaks, each one surmounted tempting him to try the still loftier ones above him. This strong desire in the heart of man to conquer and fathom the secrets of nature it is that has given new worlds to mankind. Mr. Reeve then drew a graphic description of that wondrous island-continent of Atlantis, which, according to Plato and other ancient authors, flourished some 9000 years before the Christian era, but ages

gone by sunk beneath the waves, and its place was unknown until the deep sea soundings in the Atlantic, conducted some ten years ago, revealed the extraordinary fact that what could only be a submerged island existed in mid-ocean. "Nothing is new under the sun," but, remarked Mr. Reeve, commenting on the civilization of pre-historic times, "though the germ may be old, the development is new." Few people think for themselves, even in general matters, and much less in religion, but the number of thinkers is increasing. Mr. Reeve remarked that, "Church bells ringing, and incense rising, was pageantry belonging to the stage. Look beyond all this to the virtue and truth of our lives. Find the majesty of God in the works of nature. Is not this "Excelsior." Referring to the decay of things beautiful and death, Mr. Reeve stated that the sanitary improvements in great cities had done much to lessen mortality, but he was sorry he could not include Melbourne in the list, so long as it had "that great mountain of impurity at its doors—the pest heap on the Kilda road, enough to make a Turk blush." We see the higher things of life still through a glass, but the glass is less dark than in the ages when it was blurred by the smoke and flames of bigotry and ignorance. Concluding his discourse, Mr. Reeve said, "We are like Sisyphus, perpetually rolling stones up hill;" but still, whatever our failures, we have the consolation of hearing the cry "Excelsior" go up to the sky as we raise the obstructions to advancement lying before us.

THE Treasurer acknowledges the receipt of the following subscriptions for the Unitarian Society for 1885:—

James Kinnear,	Belfast,	.. £0	2	6
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Rev. G. W. Bannister	"	.. 0	5	0

Erratum.—For "Miss J. Johnson," in last month's issue, read "Miss Johnson."

"NOT AS I WILL."

BY JAMES C. STREET.

ONE of the greatest lessons taught to the world by Jesus of Nazareth is that of submission to the Divine will. Call him God or call him man, the value of the lesson is the same. Like the rest of us he had his tastes, his preferences, his longings. Had nothing else interposed he would doubtless have chosen his own path as clearly and distinctly as ever did the most self-willed man in the world. It is easy to see that he was a man of strong, resolute will. He knew what he wanted, and he could turn his steps in the way to gain it. But a new factor, powerful and constraining, came into play, and acted as a controlling influence. That factor was the Divine will. He at once and finally admitted the supremacy of this will, and tutored his own nature into full submission. No nobler episode in the life of humanity can be found than that in Gethsemane. There the strong human nature, with its yearning for life, for victory, for success, was face to face with the iron necessity of the will of God, which seemed distinctly to point out as the true path that which led to death, defeat and failure. There is a tragic power seen in the pleading of the soul. Face to face with the reality, there is the agony of an intense and overmastering struggle. The whole world for ages has turned back to gaze upon that silent battle-field, and has never failed to see that it dwarfs into insignificance every blood-stained battle-field of history. It was man and God at distinct and deliberate issue. When man

and God are thus at issue there is never a doubt as to the result. But force alone gains no great victory. Of course strength must reign. Power ever rules. But mere force wins few laurels. If God simply crushed the life and coerced the will of man, it would be the rulership of despotism, and would win no love and promote no moral growth. The issue in Gethsemane was brought about not by the pressure of resistless force, but by the full and reverent conquest of all the fastnesses of the soul. Jesus saw that God's will was best. How it would promote his own great desires and his life-work he did not know. What it would do for him he could not tell. Clearly the immediate result would be altogether different from what he had desired and hoped; and yet, as the will of God became clear to his own soul, so clear that no room was left for mistake, he turned all his powers upon himself, and won his supreme victory. When he said, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt," he was at the supremest moment of his life, and gained his greatest triumph. Though it led him into suffering and death, it wrought out his own perfect union with God, and it taught the divinest of blessings to the world.

For union with God can only be found by full acquiescence with him—not the obedience of slaves, that must submit, and that is afraid of the taskmaster's whip, but the joyful concurrence in his will as the best and noblest thing for oneself and for the world. But to reach such a result is certainly no easy and every-day task. Every soul that reaches it has its Gethsemane. The conflict must take place, and the agony of it cannot be avoided. Our whole life is a struggle between our own desires and wishes and the inevitable and inexorable laws which are around us, and which we cannot escape. We often foolishly and frantically, like birds in a cage, beat against the bars of necessity and wound and maim ourselves in consequence; but our efforts are utterly futile, and we only learn our lesson when we are weak and crushed, our wings broken, and our hearts wildly beating. Over and over again the vain conflict is renewed, always with the same result. We blunder along in our folly, and we

go on resolutely, as if we believed that our perseverance would be rewarded, and that the victory would be ours. It never is. God must rule. His laws must be carried out, even though as they grind along they grind us under them. Call this hard, stern necessity if we will; say it is a tremendous and resistless fatalism; cry out that we are imprisoned in adamant walls; use any terms we will, but the obvious and eternal fact will remain, that law reigns and will reign, and that no prayers, entreaties, sacrifices, or frantic outbursts of passion will in the slightest degree effect any change. By degrees we learn this lesson. We cannot get out of our natural boundaries. Just as our bodies hold us in bondage to space, and will not let us go, so the laws of the universe encompass us and will not let us escape. If our own wills and desires fit in with the eternal law, all is well, and we find joy and peace; if not, we but vainly struggle, and must at last submit.

Jesus learned this lesson fully, and found out the sweetness and beauty of it. He discovered that whatever is inevitable is beautiful; that all law is beneficent; and that the Divine will is always for the good of the world; and every other great soul in history has found out the same reality. Passing through its tragic Gethsemane it has ascended the transfiguration mount.

Our own lives are luminous with the same experience. Desire has grown up within us; hopes have blossomed; plans have been matured; we have resolutely marked out our path, but the way has not been smooth; we could not go on as we wished; obstacles have arisen. On every side the walls of necessity have appeared in granite strength, and we could neither pierce nor climb them. Other human wills have opposed themselves to ours. New forces revealed themselves we had not counted upon, and generally we were made to feel that one by one our plans and schemes were brought to nought, and a power was working in opposition to us which could not be subdued. Then, at times, we were angry, fretful, and rebellious; we went on in a hard, blindfolded, dogged way, resolved to gain our point at any cost, and

many a period of our lives has been marked by grim, painful episodes which tell of our sad defeats and our awful sufferings. We were fighting against God, and could not help being defeated. At first, perhaps, we did not see this, and thought we were only proving ourselves resolute, and were nobly trying to control dead circumstances and vanquish forces obstinate and masterful, but yet inferior to ourselves. But gradually there was forced upon us the conviction that we were opposed to powers mightier than ourselves, and that however we bruised and maimed ourselves we must finally give way.

When this moment of experience was reached, we were at once brought up before the great crisis of our lives. We were like soldiers who had been making their way through an unknown territory, passing through defiles and swamps, and forcing their way through shrub and forest until, all at once, there bursts before their gaze the embattled hosts of their foes, drawn up in powerful array and ready for the dread issue of decisive battle. So, when the conviction forces itself upon our minds that we are not fighting against human principalities and powers, or against any agencies like ourselves—changeable and transient—but against the living God himself, speaking in divine law, and manifesting himself in absolute necessity, we have reached the Gethsemane of our history, and must solve the deepest problem of our lives.

Taking the very lowest point of view, what can we do? We are not strong enough to gain a victory; we must be vanquished. Supposing for the moment that our aims are the best; that our plans are the wisest; that, as a distinguished surgeon said to me the other day, undoubtedly nature has blundered, and we could have done better; supposing all this, yet of what use is it? Here we are face to face with overwhelming force; we cannot fight it; we cannot carry our plans; we cannot alter nature; blunder or not, she is omnipotent, and our efforts to subdue her are utterly futile. Why bruise ourselves in the wild conflict? Why waste our strength in the mad enterprise? We may as well submit and cry out that we are

defeated. I know we do not always do so; self-willed and stubborn, we plunge on like wild horses; we wound ourselves in vain and frantic efforts; our stormy cries go up into space when even the echoes are dead, and at length we, angry, irritated, and revengeful, lie down defeated and defiant. Of what good is it all? We are in presence of a force that renders our poor efforts powerless; submission is a necessity; we must give way.

But if we look at this power which now confronts us, and take knowledge, not simply of its irresistibility, but of its nature and tendency, we shall be better able to put ourselves into a true relationship with it. Suppose that in looking closely at it, we see not only how strong it is, but find out how beneficent it is; how it works for good; how it masters all things in order to bring about good results; how the very health and life of the world are dependent upon its victorious career; that were it to fail all would suffer, and the machinery of the world go wrong, and everything be in confusion; supposing we began to see the hard lines of the face of necessity softening into the tender graces of love, and to discover that behind the ceaselessly working law, there was a tender and loving law-giver, who gazed upon us with unutterable love, and yearned towards us with the tenderness of a Divine Father, how altered our feelings would become, and with how much more readiness should we submit to the inevitable. Not even then would our way become smooth; our own plans and hopes would have to disappear—not our will would rule. The path along which we should have to go would, most likely, be thorny and rugged enough; our feet would be wounded, and our strength fade away from us; nay, even sharper and sterner paths might open out before us; we might have to lose all we value most; our loved ones be snatched away from us; our valued possessions be torn from our hands; our strength might be reduced to weakness, and we made dependent, like children, upon those around us; all this might be, and yet our submission be not only required, but proved to be the very best for our peace and joy. But if we could only find out that inexorable law was boundless love;

that necessity was God; and that the unalterable decrees of nature are the title deeds of happiness, our battle scene in Gethsemane, however sharp and painful it might be, would speedily become the scene of our divinest triumph. It is not given to us to see all this at once; only gradually do the unveilings of God come to us. Ofttimes we have to submit to his will without knowing in any way the why and the wherefore. No doubt we can turn back to the experience of unnumbered souls in all ages and find that darkness was followed by light; that submission brought peace; that obedience led to freedom, and this should help us. The joyful testimony of our noblest would enable us to see that those who trusted most gained most; that submission to

God's will meant the highest joy; and that the working of his laws yielded the most beneficent results. But still we should be face to face with this issue—*Our* will, *God's* will. It is a sharp experience when we learn that we must submit; but the sting is taken out of it if we can say, "His will is best." The agony is supreme until the moment of divine submission comes, and then it is over, and a divine peace comes. I can well imagine the thick darkness that encompassed the soul of Jesus in that garden outside Jerusalem; but I can also form some conception of the flood of light which burst in upon him when he had said, with all his soul, "Thy will be done."

(To be continued).

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